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SUBJECT: FROM EARTH DAY TO WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY, CONSULATE MEDAN
GOES GREEN

¶1. (U) Summary: On May 24 a total of 421 students, 2 rock bands, 3 cheerleading squads, 4 environmental NGOs and a dozen journalists flocked to Consulate Medan's first-ever Environmental Fair. At the Fair Medan unveiled 10 student-produced panels designed to promote environmental awareness, and prominent environmental NGOs talked with students about what they can do to protect the environment. After the event the panels were displayed at a busy Medan shopping mall. The fair was but one of numerous environment-themed outreach efforts organized by Consulate Medan between Earth Day on April 22 and World Environment Day on June 5. Other events included planting mangroves with villagers and students, distributing seedlings, organizing an environmental film festival, and arranging school assemblies on environmental issues. End Summary.

Painting the Town Green

¶2. (U) Between Earth Day on April 22 and World Environment Day on June 5 Consulate Medan organized a series of environment-themed events in North Sumatra. To start things off, the Consulate invited 10 of Medan's largest high schools to create 5' x 8' panels to educate people about the problems facing the natural environment and what can be done about them. The colorful panels were formally unveiled at an Environmental Fair that also featured presentations by 4 major environmental NGOs and performances by 2 rock bands, 3 cheerleading squads and several dance troupes. More than 400 high school students and a dozen journalists flocked to the event. Press coverage was outstanding and local personalities, ranging from high school principals to journalists to government officials, praised the event and encouraged the Consulate to organize more activities like it.

Picking the Winners

¶3. (U) After the fair the Consulate put the panels on display at one of Medan's busiest shopping malls. From May 27 to June 4 nearly 1000 patrons cast their vote for outstanding display and well known environmental activists and famous local artists were recruited to select the most informative and most creative panels. Each winning school received a plaque and special prize: one winner won a student body assembly about environmental issues by a prominent conservation NGO while another won hosting rights to a Consulate-organized environmental film festival. The third winning school was given 30 seedlings of rare or endangered trees endemic to Sumatra. The mall's owners and management considered the exhibition to be so successful that it offered free space for future programs and has allowed the Consulate to display the panels at another of the group's properties.

Other Activities

¶4. (U) In addition to the exhibition and environmental fair, the consulate conducted numerous other activities. In one event, for

example, the consulate joined with students from Muhammadiyah University to plant 500 mangroves along a degraded coastline. In another, the Consul and District Chief arranged a seminar for 300 villagers about global warming and the environment before planting trees along the edge of the village. To help ensure that the seedlings survived till maturity, a representative from the Ministry of Forestry was on hand to show villagers how to care for the young trees. At the end of the event, the District Chief and Consul symbolically presented the "forest" to the village chief.

Impact

15. (U) Consulate Medan's environmentally-themed activities garnered extensive coverage in the local media, both in print and on television. The Jakarta Post ran a very positive piece on the Environmental Fair and panel competition on June 11. More than a dozen articles also appeared in Sumatran papers, including a local Mandarin Chinese-language daily, most featuring photos of the activities and commenting on the positive tone set by the fair and competition. TV-ONE, for example, ran a segment interviewing students and consulate personnel about what regular people can learn from the environmental displays. More importantly, by focusing attention on Indonesia's environmental challenges and how the U.S. is helping overcome them, it reinforced to critical audiences the concept that the U.S. is an interested partner in Indonesia's development.

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